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A SELECTION
FROM THE POEMS OF
MICHAEL FIELD

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP
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¹ The volumes from which the poems come are thus indicated: U.T.B., Underneath the Bough; C.A.F.R., Callirrhoe and Fair Rosamund; T.T.M., The Tragic Mary; W.H., Wild Honey; B.U., Brutus Ultor; MS., Manuscript source; T.R.O.L., The Race of Leaves; D., Dedicated; T.S., *The Spectator*, 11.8.88; S.A.S., Sight and Song; P.O.A., Poems of Adoration; M.T., Mystic Trees.

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PREFACE

'MICHAEL FIELD' was the name that Miss Katherine Bradley and Miss Edith Cooper wrote under. They had a wonderful reception in the 'eighties, announced by Browning and hailed as a major star; but their work, hurried by its welcome, disappointed this expectation, which was also dashed to discover that they were an aunt and a niece and not some man unknown, some Avatar of Waring. So silence closed about them just as they were disciplining their too blissful productiveness. The literary world having been fooled into a disproportionate eagerness, next plunged into an equally unintelligent neglect.

Miss Mary Sturgeon had done the bulk of the sorting and sifting required before a selection could be made from the voluminous product of this double literary life, before she was unfortunately forced by cruel circumstances to give the result of her labours into my more casual hands to complete and introduce to the public.

This lady's enthusiasm is one of the safest omens that could occur of the vital worth of Michael Field's poetry: before she knew any of their friends, she so admired it as to be ready to give years of work to win them the public she felt sure they deserved and of which fashion had so captiously deprived them.¹ A similar omen is the study and enthusiasm contributed by Mr. Harold Monro and Miss Klemantaski, of The Poetry Bookshop, by which the present volume has been greatly enriched.

Critics to-day, like those of yesterday, descry some
See *Michael Field*, by Mary Sturgeon. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1922.

one quality, without which the perfect bloom of poetic beauty cannot exist. They call it magic, the authentic thrill, exuberance, etc., each blinded by the poem, poet or period he or she happens to be in love with. This passion bestows a certain favour on their most impossible judgements; for devotion is so divine a state that we envy all who are whole-heartedly given. But the truth about poetry, as about other works of art, is, that no one character is always essential, no ingredient a *sine qua non*. The effect of the whole, the fusion of the qualities present, make a poem a success, no matter how many or how fine, may be absent.

The wind of fashion blows till it provokes another from some fresh quarter, and the new fashion pities its own flimsiness under guise of the contempt it heaps on the last. Those who wish to find and hold the best will resolutely remind themselves that, during the reign of any movement, only a few good and many ephemeral poems were produced, and that amongst those few good are often some that seem strangely aloof from the dominant mode.

As poems become longer, they are, more and more rarely, perfect wholes. Great works, by Shakespeare and Milton even, need to be cut if we would view their fine structures clearly. With lesser poets, often more than half must be lopped away. The critic's arms drop as he prospects the tedious task, and he turns to pleasantly hang on an heterogeneous poet the now indiscriminate commendations and detractions that could only have truth applied to actual passages. Therefore I have not hesitated to remove lines and stanzas where I felt certain the whole could thus be made more complete. I have also, with Miss Sturgeon's consent, rearranged the poems in groups, thinking

always of the effect on the mind of a reader rather than of mechanical headings such as lyric, dramatic, religious, etc., though I have not avoided such a disposition in so far as it seemed effective. I may mention that the first group is to my thinking of a richer and more varied felicity than the work of any but 'major' poets afford. Fine though some of the longer poems in this book are, they rarely attain to the integrity achieved by the magnificent 'Descent from the Cross,' or the surprising 'Tiresias.' The subject and conception of *Julia Domna*, the mother who found her two sons at deadly feud for the Roman Empire almost before they had broken from her encircling arms, was, I think, a great find; the tragedy is so fundamental. I have therefore violently compressed the gist of this little-known and hardly accessible drama¹ into a few pages. This theme is essentially as human and as significant as are those of 'Lear' or 'Phèdre.' Whether and to what extent this work succeeds it would be premature to assert, but that the accent and power required are sometimes attained, the quotations will, I think, prove.

A scene from their earlier, and perhaps in some ways more successful, 'Fair Rosamund,' where Queen Elinor delights in the ferocity of her cubs, may have held a prognostic of their discovery of this mighty theme, such as may be divined in 'Titus Andronicus' for that of 'Othello.' However little this suggestion may sort with the 'gentle Shakespeare' of some who know so much more than I can hope to; still, certain moods or directions of emotion seem to cut deep gorges in fine minds that a later occasion may then flood anew with all the grander effect.

¹ *Julia Domna*, by Michael Field. The Vale Press, 1903.

It does not appear that the critics who have from time to time asserted the supremacy of *Philip van Artevelde*, *Bothwell*, *A Princess of the House of Hanover*, *The Queen of China*, etc., in that class of plays which seem rather intended to be read as novels than seen upon the boards, had really compared their favourites with *The Tragic Mary*. Charles Wells' *Joseph and His Brethren* was rightly singled out from this class by Rossetti and Swinburne, and may still retain the first place, but the second?

External conditions are hostile to the Tragic drama. It must not be supposed that any adequate experiments have been made either by The Stage, The Phoenix, or any other society: it would cost too much in time and money to train actors to do for verse, what Chaliapine and his fellows did for opera. Besides, a prevalent mentality indulges other hopes, and thinks to have turned its back on 'romantic art.'

'Romantic'—this word has been used in so many senses, that to-day it may mean anything, therefore does mean nothing. Those who take the trouble to define it, will, I think, always find that some other is less ambiguous, if less convenient for the idle disparager of work he does not mean to study.

To show a poet's best is the surest way to praise and win him readers. The first group in this book I hope may prove a diviner's rod, by which many may discover in the comparative confusion of less felicitous structures, those stores of refreshment which at present lie buried in Michael Field's numerous volumes.

My praise will be suspected because the occasion provokes it. Though aware of this, I shall not refrain till the challenge of the occasion has been returned by some as provocative assertions.

'I could wish to be dead,' is hard to match outside a few of Shelley's finest lyrics. It is exceptional, yet those on pp. 22 and 25 rival and, I think, surpass the very best Landor. Pages 26 and 32, met at unawares, might set one hunting the Elizabethans for the satisfying author's name, to conclude that there must be an important one unknown. Pages 23 and 33 demand a like discovery among the great Victorians. No one of this first section would appear of less than first magnitude in the Georgian books, and yet several that anthologists have delighted to single out remain to be discovered in other sections which contain many more as deserving of admiration.

And if Michael Field, since he never existed, may be a legitimate peg to hang psychology on, let me mock those critics who always focus attention on the man and his surmised love-affairs. For them the dominant mood of each play was Shakespeare's when he wrote it; though Mr. Yeats' theory is more plausible, that the imagination uses precisely those passions, moods, and faculties that are inhibited by daily life, as Freudians hold that the dream does. Besides, it is possible that there are quite sane creators for whom the mood of each work is dictated by the subject chosen, and neither imposed by a secret passion nor by a sub-conscious activity. Surely works of art should be significant not for relations with things beyond their scope, but by those which obtain between their parts, and they fail in so far as, like the burglar's thumbmark, they impertinently betray an author's inadvertences. But scandal is ever dearer to the vulgar than beauty. Then in mockery of critics who find such ideas hard to digest, I see Michael Field, impulsive and florid, leap on the back of each fugitive emotion. Often the bare back

lighted on is of less pure blood than that caught in the vividly despairing 'I could wish to be dead.' But the ardency and daring displayed are ever as delightful as those of Marlowe, Shelley, and Swinburne. Though the technical virtuosity be less, did any of these masters nourish such varied æsthetic interests? If Field's attack on his subjects resembles the leap from tame to wild horse on the pampas, his failures have the same unpremeditated character: these must stand confessed in narrative and tragedy, and therefore praise is quite free with the lyric captures alone. And our bold tamer of thought and word as he grew older may have wished to admit:

There are voices in me
That thrust me quite aside, and silences
Too sluggish for my will.

His loyalty to thought, emotion and enterprise, sustained his effort beyond his strength, the zest of his daring was too wild for his skill. Yet alongside his frustrate efforts, long-maned, bridleless, bitless, ever and anon reappeared a success worth a reader's utmost effort to capture and ride. We never know such a poet's best until we can throw ourselves astride his moods as freely as he did when they first carried him away.

T. STURGE MOORE

Grateful acknowledgements for permission to reprint a majority of the poems in this book are due to Messrs. George Bell & Sons Ltd.; Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, Mr. Eveleigh Nash, and Messrs. Sands & Co.

PROLOGUE

It was deep April, and the morn
Shakespeare was born;
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My Love and I took hands and swore,
Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers ever more,
To laugh and dream on Lethe's shore,
To sing to Charon in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgment never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
Continually
With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

THOU HAST THY KINGDOM IN THE TREES

O Wind, thou hast thy kingdom in the trees,
And all thy royalties
Sweep through the land to-day.
It is mid June,
And thou, with all thine instruments in tune,
Thine orchestra
Of heaving fields, and heavy, swinging fir,
Strikest a lay
That doth rehearse
Her ancient freedom to the universe.
All other sound in awe
Repeals its law;
The bird is mute, the sea
Sucks up its waves, from rain
The burthened clouds refrain,
To listen to thee in thy leafery,
Thou unconfined,
Lavish, large, soothing, reflux summer-wind.

STREAM AND POOL

Mine is the eddying foam and the broken current,
Thine the serene-flowing tide, the unshattered rhythm;
Light touches me on the surface with glints of sunshine,
Dives in thy bosom, disclosing a mystic river;
Ruffling, the wind takes the crest of my waves resurgent,
Stretches his pinions at poise on thy even ripples;
What is my song but the tumult of chafing forces,
What is thy silence, Beloved, but enchanted music?

A WOODSTOCK ECHO

Love doth never know
Why it is beloved,
And to ask were treason:
Let the wonder grow!
Were its hopes removed,
Were itself disproved
By cold reason,
Still in happy season
Love would be beloved.

EROS DOES NOT ALWAYS SMITE

Ah, Eros does not always smite
With cruel, shining dart,
Whose bitter point with sudden might
Rends the unhappy heart—

O'er it sometimes the boy will deign
Sweep the shaft's feathered end;
And friendship rises without pain
Where the white plumes descend.

GOLD IS THE SON OF ZEUS: NEITHER MOTH
NOR WORM MAY GNAW IT

Διὸς παῖς ὁ χρυσός·

κεῖνον οὐ σῆς οὐδὲ κίς δάπτει.¹

Yea, gold is son of Zeus: no rust

Its timeless light can stain;

The worm that brings man's flesh to dust

Assaults its strength in vain:

• More gold than gold the love I sing,

A hard, inviolable thing.

Men say the passions should grow old

• With waning years; (my heart

• Is incorruptible as gold,

• 'Tis my immortal part:

Nor is there any god can lay

On love the finger of decay.

¹ To form the volume *Long Ago*, the fragments of 'Sappho' were each expanded into a poem; this volume contains much of their happiest work.

STIR NOT THE SHINGLE

Μὴ κίνη χέραδος.

Stir not the shingle with thy boat,
It groans beneath the keel;
Still on the senseless waters float,
Until thy heart can feel;

• Keep to Ægæan tracts of fair,
• Invulnerable sea;
• The land cries out in pain to bear
• One who from love is free.

Yea, linger 'mid the barren foam,
Ungreeted, out of reach
Of those who watch the sailor home
On Mitylene beach.

AND ON MY EYES DARK SLEEP BY NIGHT

Ὀφθαλμοῖς δὲ μέλαις νυκτὸς ἄωρος.

Come, dark-eyed Sleep, thou child of Night,
Give me thy dreams, thy lies;
Lead through the horny portal white
The pleasure day denies.

O bring the kiss I could not take
From lips that would not give;
Bring me the heart I could not break,
The bliss for which I live.

I care not if I slumber blest
By fond delusion; nay,
Put me on Phaon's lips to rest,
And cheat the cruel day!

THE TRAGIC MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Ah me, if I grew sweet to man
It was but as a rose that can
No longer keep the breath that heaves
And swells among its folded leaves.

The pressing fragrance would uncloset
The flower, and I became a rose,
That unimpeachable and fair
Planted its sweetness in the air.

No art I used men's love to draw;
I lived but by my being's law,
As roses are by heaven designed
To bring the honey to the wind.

THE TRAGIC MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

I could wish to be dead!

• Too quick with life were the tears I shed,

• Too sweet for tears is the life I led;

And ah, too lonesome my marriage-bed!

I could wish to be dead.

I could wish to be dead,

For just a word that rings in my head;

Too dear, too dear are the words he said,

They must never be rememberèd.

I could wish to be dead.

I could wish to be dead:

The wish to be loved is all mis-read,

And to love, one learns when one is wed,

Is to suffer bitter shame; instead

I could wish to be dead.

SADDER THAN TO SAY FAREWELL

Ah me, how sadder than to say farewell

It is to meet

Dreading that love hath lost his spell

And changed his sweet!

I would we were again to part,

With that full heart.

BUT IF OUR LOVE BE DYING

But if our love be dying let it die

As the rose, shedding secretly,

Or as a noble music's pause:

Let it move rhythmic as the laws

Of the sea's ebb, or the sun's ritual

When sovereignly he dies:

Then let a mourner rise and three times call

Upon our love, and the long echoes fall.

THE HALCYON

O Love, O bitter, mortal journeying
By ways that are not told !
I would not sing, no song is sweet to me
Now thou art gone:
But would, ah, would I were the halcyon,
That sky-blue bird of spring,
So should I bring
Fair sister companies of fleetest wing
To bear thee on,
Thou being old,
With an untroubled heart to carry thee
Safe o'er the ridges of the wearying sea.

AFTER SOUFRIERE ¹

It is not grief or pain ;
But like the even dropping of the rain,
That thou art gone.
It is not like a grave
To weep upon ;
But like the rise and falling of a wave
When the vessel's gone.

It is like the sudden void
When the city is destroyed,
Where the sun shone:
* There is neither grief nor pain,
* But the wide waste come again.

¹ I believe this title to refer to a volcanic cataclysm in which the town of Soufrière in Guadeloupe was destroyed, and which had occurred just before the poem was written.

BURY HER AT EVEN

* Bury her at even
* That the stars may shine
* Soon above her,
* And the dews of twilight cover:
Bury her at even
Ye that love her.

* Bury her at even
* In the wind's decline;
Night receive her
Where no noise can ever grieve her!
Bury her at even,
And then leave her!

METE ME OUT MY LONELINESS

Come, mete me out my loneliness, O wind,
For I would know
How far the living who must stay behind
Are from the dead who go.

Eternal Passer-by, I feel there is
In thee a stir,
A strength to span the yawning distances
From her gravestone to her.

THE WOODS ARE STILL

* The woods are still that were so gay at primrose springing,
* Through the dry woods the brown fieldfares are winging,
And I alone of love, of love am singing.

* I sing of love to the haggard palmer-worm,
* Of love 'mid the crumpled oak-leaves that once were firm,
* Laughing, I sing of love at the summer's term,

* —Of love, on a path where the snake's cast skin is lying,
* Blue feathers on the floor, and no cuckoo flying;
* I sing to the echo of my own voice crying.

SWEETER FAR THAN THE HARP, MORE
GOLD THAN GOLD

Πολὺ πακτίδος ἀδυμελεστέρα,
χρυσῷ χρυσοτέρα.

Thine elder that I am, thou must not cling
To me, nor mournful for my love entreat:
And yet, Alcæus, as the sudden spring
Is love, yea, and to veiled Demeter sweet.

Sweeter than tone of harp, more gold than gold
Is thy young voice to me; yet, ah, the pain
To learn I am beloved now I am old,
Who, in my youth, loved, as thou must, in vain.

IF THEY HONOURED ME, GIVING ME
THEIR GIFTS

Αἵ με τιμίαν ἐπόησαν ἔργα
τὰ σφὰ δοῖσαι.

They bring me gifts, they honour me,
Now I am growing old;
And wondering youth crowds round my knee,
As if I had a mystery
And worship to unfold.

To me the tender, blushing bride
Doth come with lips that fail;
I feel her heart beat at my side
And cry: 'Like Ares in his pride,
Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!'

And to the doubting boy, afraid
Of too ambitious bliss,
I whisper: 'None is like thy maid,
And I her fond heart will persuade
To feel thou feelest this.'

Or if Persephone should take
From me some maid full dear,
While friends their lamentations make,
I rise, and for the lover's sake
I praise her loud and clear.

Ye bring me gifts, ye honour me
For music and for rhyme;
And if at last my soul sings free,
It is that once I stood, as ye,
Dumb in youth's golden clime.

HADES IS TONGUELESS

Hades is tongueless,
Death hath no lyre;
Deep, deep the rest he gives
From life's long tire,
Laying the fevered heart
Far from desire.

He with oblivion
Comes as a charm,
Nought that hath chanced to us
Further can harm;
Passion, vicissitude,
Break not our calm.

Fear of the future
Ageing to-day,
Terrors of clinging love,
Presage, dismay,
Senseless, distorting hope,
Death puts away.

He is the Helper;
What can transcend
His care that provideth
For grief, an end,
For rest, eternity?
Death is our friend.

AN ÆOLIAN HARP

• Dost thou not hear? Amid dun, lonely hills,
• Far off, a melancholy music shrills,
As for a joy that no fruition fills.

• Who live in that far country of the wind?
The unclaimed hopes, the powers but half-divined,
The shy, heroic passions of mankind.

And all are young in those reverberant bands;
None marshals them, no mellow voice commands;
• They whirl and eddy as the shifting sands.

• There, there is ruin, and no ivy clings;
There pass the mourners for untimely things,
There breaks the stricken cry of crownless kings.

the first of these is the fact that the
 government has been unable to secure
 the necessary funds to carry out its
 policy of non-interference.

The second is the fact that the
 government has been unable to secure
 the necessary funds to carry out its
 policy of non-interference.

The third is the fact that the
 government has been unable to secure
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The fourth is the fact that the
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 government has been unable to secure
 the necessary funds to carry out its
 policy of non-interference.

The eighth is the fact that the
 government has been unable to secure
 the necessary funds to carry out its
 policy of non-interference.

RENEWAL

As the young phœnix, duteous to his sire,
Lifts in his beak the creature he has been,
And lifting o'er the corse broad vans for screen,
Bears it to solitudes, erects a pyre,
And, soon as it is wasted by the fire,
Grides with disdainful claw the ashes clean;
Then spreading unencumbered wings serene,
Mounts to the æther with renewed desire:
So joyously I lift myself above
The life I buried in hot flames to-day;
The flames themselves are dead: and I can range
Alone through the untarnished sky I love,
And trust myself, as from the grave one may,
To the enchanting miracles of change.

CONSTANCY

I love her with the seasons, with the winds,
As the stars worship, as anemones
Shudder in secret for the sun, as bees
Buzz round an open flower: in all kinds
My love is perfect, and in each she finds
Herself the goal: then why, intent to tease
And rob her delicate spirit of its ease,
Hastes she to range me with inconstant minds?
If she should die, if I were left at large
On earth without her—I, on earth, the same
Quick mortal with a thousand cries, her spell
She fears would break. And I confront the charge,
As sorrowing, and as careless of my fame,
As Christ intact before the infidel.

ARMOUR

Why lack I so in prowess to oppose?
What quality enfeebls my defence?
Spirit I have, courage that courts her foes,
And I am very proud and nice of sense.
Is it, of Love himself I am equipt
For contest, and with Love I must contend,—
In treachery has he some buckle slipt,
The breastplate not set even to defend?
Though to the rush of onset I am fleet,
And guard within my heart most bitter rage,
I know I am predestined to defeat,
My helm, my spears, a ghostly equipage:
All the fair panoply about me spread,
Thin as the thin gold armour of the dead.

FOREVER

‘There is a change in love that is not ebb,
For love, as life, must Time’s behest obey;
There is the wonder of the growing web,
And lilies spin their blooms beneath the clay.’
—This from my head to my sad breast I speed:
But Reason there a world of angry sighs
Encountereth—‘The antique spell is dead,
And, if love’s favour altereth, love dies.’
The god to my extremity—‘Dear Heart,
Mourn not defect and lovely hours undone,
For every mother from her child must part,
Yea, every mother that doth rear a son!’
And blushing at the keen rebuke I pass,
Smile at the scythe and smile at Time’s hour-glass.

EBBTIDE AT SUNDOWN

O larger is remembrance than desire!
O deeper than all longing is regret!
The tide is gone, the sands are rippled yet;
The sun is gone: the hills are lifted higher,
Crested with rose. Ah, why should we require
Sight of the sea, the sun? The sands are wet,
And in their glassy flaws huge record set
Of the ebb'd stream, the little ball of fire.
Gone, they are gone! But oh, so freshly gone,
So rich in vanishing we ask not where—
So close upon us is the bliss that shone,
And oh, so thickly it impregns the air!
Closer in beating heart we could not be
To the sunk sun, the far, surrendered sea.

TO THE LORD LOVE

(At the approach of old age)
I am thy fugitive, thy votary,
Nor even thy mother tempts me from thy shrine:
Mirror, nor gold, nor ornament of mine
Appease her: thou art all my gods to me,
And I so breathless in my loyalty,
Youth hath slipped by and left no footprint sign:
Yet there are footsteps nigh. My years decline.
Decline thy years? Burns thy torch duskily?
Lord Love, to thy great altar I retire;
Time doth pursue me, age is on my brow,
And there are cries and shadows of the night.
Transform me, for I cannot quit thee now:
Love, thou hast weapons visionary, bright—
Keep me perpetual in grace and fire!

III

A GIRL

A girl,
• Her soul a deep-wave pearl,
Dim, lucent of all lovely mysteries;
A face flowered for heart's ease,
• A brow's grace (soft as seas
• Seen through faint forest trees:
A mouth, the lips apart,
• Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
From her tempestuous heart.
• Such: (and our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ—
The work begun
Will be to heaven's conception done,
If she come to it

A MIRACLE

How gladly I would give
My life to her who would not care to live
If I should die!
Death, when thou passest by,
Take us together, so I sigh,
Praying and sighing through the London streets
While my heart beats
To do some miracle, when suddenly
At curve of Regent Circus I espy,
Set 'mid a jeweller's trays of spangle-glitter,
A tiny metal insect-pin, a fly.
This utter trifle for my love I buy,
And, thinking of it on her breast,
My heart has rest.

MY LADY HAS A LOVELY RITE

My lady has a lovely rite:

When I am gone

No prayer she saith

As one in fear:

For orison,

Pressing her pillows white

With kisses, just the sacred number,

She turns to slumber;

Adding sometimes thereto a tear

And a quick breath.

SECOND THOUGHTS

I thought of leaving her for a day
In town, it was such iron winter
At Durdans, the garden frosty clay,
The woods as dry as any splinter,
The sky congested. I would break
From the deep, lethargic, country air
To the shining lamps, to the clash of the play,
And, to-morrow, wake
Beside her, a thousand things to say.
I planned—O more—I had almost started;—
I lifted her face in my hands to kiss,—
A face in a border of fox's fur,
For the bitter black wind had stricken her,
And she wore it—her soft hair straying out
Where it buttoned against the gray, leather snout:
In an instant we should have parted;
But at sight of the delicate world within
That fox-fur collar, from brow to chin,
At sight of those wonderful eyes from the mine,
Coal pupils, an iris of glittering spa,
And the wild, ironic, defiant shine
As of a creature behind a bar
One has captured, and, when three lives are past,
May hope to reach the heart of at last,
All that, and the love at her lips, combined
To shew me what folly it were to miss
A face with such thousand things to say,
And beside these, such thousand more to spare,
For the shining lamps, for the clash of the play—
O madness; not for a single day
Could I leave her! I stayed behind.

THOU MUST NOT LEAVE ME
Thou must not leave me !
Though 'tis a mournful land
Through which I travel,
I will but guide thee, hand in hand,
To mysteries thou must in art unravel.
When thou a little way hast gone,
• Ere the grove's steep descent
• Darkening can grieve thee,
• Thou backward to the sweet stars shalt be sent;
While I plod on
To Acheron.

I LOVE YOU WITH MY LIFE

I love you with my life—'tis so I love you;
I give you as a ring
The cycle of my days till death:
I worship with the breath
That keeps me in the world with you and spring;
And God may dwell behind, but not above you.

Mine, in the dark, before the world's beginning:
The claim of every sense,
Secret and source of every need;
The goal to which I speed,
And at my heart a vigour more immense
Than will itself to urge me to its winning.

FREEDOM

When I would think of what is free,
O timeless one, I think of thee;
Thou hast forgotten how we went together
Across the heather
Where I am left behind;
And I rejoice thy motions are
Swift, indifferent and far:
The birth-springs of the wind
Are for thy roving; and for me
The joy of bringing all those things to mind
We thought together,
Treading these little pathways of the heather.

ACROSS A GAUDY ROOM

Across a gaudy room
I looked and saw his face,
Beneath the sapless palm-trees, in the gloom
Of the distressing place,
Where everyone sat tired,
Where talk itself grew stale,
Where, as the day began to fail,
No guest had just the power required
To rise and go: I strove with my disgust;
But at the sight of him my eyes were fired
To give one glance, as though they must
Be sociable with what they found of fair
And free and simple in a chamber where
Life was so base.

As when a star is lit
In the dull evening sky,
Another soon leaps out to answer it,
Even so the bright reply
Came sudden from his eyes,
By all but me unseen;
Since then the distance that between
Our lives unalterably lies
Is but a darkness, intimate and still,
Which messages may traverse, where replies
May sparkle from afar, until
The night becomes a mystery made clear
Between two souls forbidden to draw near:
Creator, why?

CHALICES

Tall lilies ranged in quires around us in the room
Where of Fate's careful hands at last we came to meet;
After long years we rose as spirits of fresh plume,
And standing, side by side, smiled at our love's defeat.

Beside us, yet, it seemed, below us and removed,
Freeing us as the slave that keeps his master free,
Those twain, each dearer than our liberty
Of whom Love, breaking on us, found us fast beloved.

MARIONETTES

We met

After a year. I shall never forget
How odd it was for our eyes to meet,
For we had to repeat
In our glances the words that we had said
In days when, as our lashes lifted
Or drooped, the universe was shifted.
We had not closed with the past, then why
Did the sense come over us as a fetter
That all we did, speaking eye to eye,
Had been done before, and so much better?
I think—but there's no saying,
What made us so hateful was the rage
Of our souls at finding themselves a stage
Where Marionettes were playing;
For a great actor once had trod
Those boards, and played the god.

WET WEATHER

Clime—

And what it can do! For so long a time
He had been in the south,
In a land of drouth
His beauty was sun-struck and harried:
One looked where it was wont to rise
Just over the temples, looked in vain;
But now that he has tarried
A few short weeks in our trickling rain,
Under skies that are blue for just an hour,
And then close for a storm: ah, now
There is lambency on his brow;
His lashes and eyes
Are touched with the trembling, silver dyes
Of moonlight, when the moon is lost;
While the dazzling hazes
By which the warm, damp cheek is crost
In this favouring air, increase the power
Of his mouth,—a dash of pomegranate-flower,
Firm, vermeil, brilliant! Thine the praise is—
O England, get
More steamy in thy summer wet!
Shower after shower,
With thy storms, with thy skies of an azure hour,
Enhance the grace,
Quicken the crystals of his face!

PRIMROSE LEAVES

Not always with the spring its joyance closes;
It is midsummer, love, and while I pass
Among forgotten things—
Dry oak-sprays, faded mosses, woodbine strings—
The large, clear leaves of primroses
Spread through the grass.

Not always with love's flower love perishes;
Long time our passion hath been dead, and still
About my heart doth thrive
A memory of thee so green, so live
A solemn power it cherishes
To bless and thrill.

DEATH, MEN SAY, IS LIKE A SEA
Death, men say, is like a sea
That engulfs mortality,
Treacherous, dreadful, blindingly
Full of storm and terror.

Death is like the deep, warm sand,
Pleasant when we come to land,
Covering up with tender hand
The wave's drifted error.

Death's a couch of golden ground,
Warm, soft, permeable mound,
Where from even memory's sound
We shall have remission.

IV

PAN ASLEEP

He half unearthed the Titans with his voice,
The stars are leaves before his windy riot;
The spheres a little shake; but see, of choice,
How closely he wraps up in hazel quiet.
And while he sleeps the bees are numbering
The fox-glove flowers from base to sealèd tip
Till fond, they doze upon his slumbering,
And smear with honey his wide, smiling lip.
He may not be disturbed: (it is the hour
That to his deepest solitude belongs;
The unfrighted reed opens to noontide flower,
And poets hear him sing their lyric songs,
While the Arcadian hunter, baffled, hot,
Scourges his statue in its ivy-grot.

FROZEN RUSHES

Who is this satyr that with shepherd crook,
And fillet of dead pansies in his hand
Issues from forest-cranny to this nook,
Where in a phalanx frozen rushes stand?
'Tis Pan among the thick-spiked icicles.
O see, through all this winter, his device
To get down to the pith where music swells,
To clear the reed-bed from its ribs of ice.
'Nay, push not with thy finger 'mid the stones
At the pool's edges where the water drips,
Nay, fret not for thy Syrinx—she is safe;
Thou canst not draw her music to thy lips.'
A withered god among the briars he moans,
And breathes upon the reeds as he would chafe.

PENETRATION

(Syrinx to Pan)

I love thee: never dream that I am dumb:
By day, by night, my tongue besiegeth thee,
As a bat's voice, set in too fine a key,
Too tender in its circumstance to come
To ears beset by havoc and harsh hum
Of the arraigning world; yet secretly
I may attain: lo, even a dead bee
Dropt sudden from thy open hand by some
Too careless wind is laid among thy flowers,
Dear to thee as the bees that sing and roam:
Thou watchest when the angry moon drops foam:
Thou answerest the faun's soft-footed stare:
No influence, but thou feelest it is there,
And drawest it profound, into thy hours.

ONYCHA¹

(Pan to Eros)

There is a silence of deep gathered eve,
There is a quiet of young things at rest:
In summer, when the honeysuckles heave
Their censer-boughs, the forest is exprest.
What singeth like an orchard cherry-tree
Of its blown blossom white from tip to root,
Or solemn ocean moving silently,
Or the great choir of stars for ever mute?
So falleth on me a great solitude;
With miser's clutch I gather in the spell
Of loving thee, unwooing and unwooed;
And, as the silence settles, by degrees
Fill with thy sweetness as a perfumed shell
Sunk inaccessible in Indian seas.

¹ Onycha=An ingredient of incense made from a marine mollusc, which emits a penetrating aroma when burnt.

NOT APHRODITE

I found Love by a fountain and alone,
And had no fear and crept up to his face;
'And Love,' I said, 'art thou indeed alone?
For I am fall'n into such deep disgrace
That, though I sought thy mother, I could ne'er,
Seeing she is but a woman, of my pride,
For very shame open my heart to her.
But tell me, while I sit down at thy side,
Rather of those first days when thou wert mated
With many a stubborn force, and fierce the strife,
How light was of thy loving power created:
And all thy labour not for death, but life.'
Oh, then I heard how the sweet stars were born,
And very softly put away my scorn.

EROS

O Eros of the mountains, of the earth,
One thing I know of thee that thou art old,
Far, sovereign, lonesome tyrant of the dearth
Of chaos, ruler of the primal cold!
None gave thee nurture: chaos' icy rings
Pressed on thy plenitude. O fostering power,
Thine the first voice, first warmth, first golden wings,
First blowing zephyr, earliest opened flower;
Thine the first smile of Time: thou hast no mate,
Thou art alone forever giving all:
After thine image, Love, thou did'st create
Man to be poor, man to be prodigal;
And thus, O awful god, he is endued
With the raw hungers of thy solitude.

FIFTY QUATRAINS

'Twas fifty quatrains: and from unknown strands
The woman came who sang them on the floor.
I saw her, I was leaning by the door,
—Saw her strange raiment and her lovely hands;
And saw . . . but *that* I think she sang—the bands
Of low-voiced women on a happy shore:
Incomparable was the haze, and bore
The many blossoms of soft orchard lands.
'Twas fifty quatrains, for I caught the measure;
And all the royal house was full of kings,
Who listened and beheld her and were dumb;
Nor dared to seize the marvellous rich pleasure,
Too fearful even to ask in whisperings,
The ramparts being closed, whence she had come.

MY DARLING

Τὸ μέλημα τοῦμόν.

Atthis, my darling, thou did'st stray
A few feet to the rushy bed,
When a great fear and passion shook
My heart lest haply thou wert dead;
It grew so still about the brook,
As if a soul were drawn away.

My darling! Nay, our very breath
Nor light nor darkness shall divide;
Queen Dawn shall find us on one bed,
Nor must thou flutter from my side
An instant, lest I feel the dread,
Atthis, the immanence of death.

WHEN WRATH SPREADS THROUGH THY
BREAST, BEWARE OF AN IDLY BARKING
TONGUE

Σκιδναμένος ἐν στήθεσιν ὄργας
μαψυλάκαν γλῶσσαν πεφυλάχθαι.

When through thy breast wild wrath doth spread
And work thy inmost being harm,
Leave thou the fiery word unsaid,
Guard thee; be calm.

Apollo, when they do thee wrong,
Speechless thou tak'st the golden dart:
I will refrain my barking tongue
And strike the heart.

YE ARE NAUGHT TO ME

Ὅτ' τί μοι ὕμνετε.

Naught to me! So I choose to say:
We meet, old friends, about the bay;
The golden pulse grows on the shore—
Are not all things as heretofore
Now we have cast our love away?

Men throng us; thou art naught to me,
Therefore, indifferent, I can see
Within thine eyes the brightening grace
That once thou gavest face to face;
'Tis natural they welcome thee!

Naught to me, like the silver ring,
Thy mislaid, worthless gift. Last Spring,
As any careless girl, I lost
The pin, yet, by the tears it cost,
It should have been worth cherishing.

Naught, naught! and yet if thou dost pass
I grow as summer-coloured grass,
And if I wrap my chiton round,
I know thine ear hath caught the sound,
Although thou heedest not, alas!

Naught to me! Wherefore dost thou throw
On me that glittering glance, as though,
Friend, I had ever done thee wrong,
When the crowd asks me for the song,
'Atthis, I loved thee long ago'?

SPRING'S MESSENGER, THE SWEET-VOICED
NIGHTINGALE

Ἦρος ἄγγελος ἡμερόφωνος ἀηδών.

Beside each forest-root
The lilies freshly shoot,
Narcissi crown the grass,
Bees hum, and toil, and pass.

Then breaks the piercing note
From Philomel's wild throat :
Passion's supremest pain
That may not hope again.

Zeus sends the gracious Spring,
And must her herald sing
In kindly-bowered retreat
Only of love's defeat ?

BUT DO NOT GIVE YOURSELF AIRS
BECAUSE OF A FINGER-RING

Ἄλλα μὴ μεγαλύνεο δακτυλίῳ πέρι.

Come, Gorgo, put the rug in place,

And passionate recline;

I love to see thee in thy grace,

Dark, virulent, divine.

But wherefore thus thy proud eyes fix

Upon a jewelled band?

Art thou so glad the sardonyx

Becomes thy shapely hand?

Bethink thee! 'Tis for such as thou

Zeus leaves his lofty seat;

'Tis at thy beauty's bidding how

Man's mortal life shall fleet;

Those fairest hands—dost thou forget

Their power to thrill and cling?

O foolish woman, dost thou set

Thy pride upon a ring?

TOWARDS THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE
NOBLE MY MIND DOES NOT CHANGE

Ταῖς κάλαις ὑμῖν τὸ νόημα τῶμον οὐ διάμειπτον.

Maids, not to you my mind doth change;

Men I defy, allure, estrange,

Prostrate, make bond or free:

Soft as the stream beneath the plane

To you I sing my love's refrain;

Between us is no thought of pain,

Peril, satiety.

When injuries my spirit bruise,

Allaying virtue ye infuse

With unobtrusive skill:

And if care frets ye come to me

As fresh as nymph from stream or tree,

And with your soft vitality

My weary bosom fill.

AN AYRSHIRE FACE

We meet at dinner. 'I come from Ayr,'
My neighbour says; but I doubt if there;
Where Nature knows how to mould a man,
A fellow to mate him could be found.
And yet, as more carefully I scan—
Where is the wonder? Body round
And chubby, features smooth of wrinkle,
Modelled much in the peasant's style,
And 'twixt the lashes, and on the lip,
Bewitching the very cheeks, the twinkle
Of perfect temper, and in the smile—
(I think it was there the face appealed)
With softness either to win or yield,
And record of many a human slip—
A delicious fund of fellowship.

A SUPPOSITION

The tips of the hills rise up like curled
Waves on the verge, from Gallow Hill:
Rim on rim, what a wide, round world
The man to be hanged must have looked on, till
It closed up tight in the grip of the noose.
To think that just on a day like this—
Harvest in valley, sun profuse—
Some six of one's fellows should deprive
A soul of the joy of being alive,
And watching the sun and the mountains kiss!
But what if his captors after all
Were balked of putting their man in thrall,
And just when they choked him, eye and breath,
Their victim were sailing out clear to death,
No longer to blink in the flashing sun,
To be in the light, in the very run,
And reach past the mountain's curling rim;—
If, while the troopers were burying him,
With thought of hell and the Judgment grim,
He were stretching his limbs from life's fetter-curse
To rest in the golden universe?

NESTS IN ELMS

The rooks are cawing up and down the trees!
Ripe as old music is the summer's measure
Of love, of all the busy-ness of leisure,
With dream on dream of never-thwarted ease!
O homely birds, whose cry is harbinger
Of nothing sad, who know not anything
Of sea-birds' loneliness, of Procne's strife,
Rock round me when I die! So sweet it were
To lie by open doors, with you on wing
Humming the deep security of life.

A FLAW

To give me its bright plumes they shot a jay:
On the fresh jewels, blood! Oh, sharp remorse!
The glittering symbols of the little corse
I buried where the wood was noisome, blind,
Praying that I might nevermore betray
The universe, so whole within my mind.

CONTINENTAL TRIPS FORGONE FOR THE SAKE OF WHYM CHOW¹

The moonlight lies a pavement on the grass,
The forest is dark air against the sky—
I leave my chow-dog by the fire, and pass
The window-pane on to the void. A cry
Behind me, on my track, sharp as the sight
Of injured ghost, intrepid in his pain,
And whimsical as effort of a sprite
To do an errand on the earth again!
A cry—my knowledge of the heart it wrings
Has held me many years from liberty,
From Anet, and from Blois; and, as I live,
The motion of that tender vocative
Shall stay my foot from all those dreamèd things
And all the diverse kingdoms over sea.

WHYM CHOW

Nay, thou art my eternal attribute:
Not as Saint Agnes in loose arms her lamb—
The very essence of the thing I am:
And, as the lion, at Saint Jerome's suit,
Stood ever at his right hand, scanning mute
The hollows of the fountainous earth, whence swam
Emergent from the welter, sire and dam:
While Jerome with no knowledge of the brute
Beside him, wrote of later times, of curse,
Bloodshed, and bitter exile, verse on verse
Murmuring above the manuscript [*in awe*
The lion watched his lord, the Vulgate grew],
So it was wont to be betwixt us two—
How still thou lay'st deep-nosing on thy paw!

¹ This dog had at length to be put out of his pain, but for years he had received the adoration of his Mistress in contented health. His death was one of the means of her conversion to Romanism.

HALLS OF SUFFERING

I call along the Halls of Suffering,
Hark! down each aisle reverberated cries
Out of deep wounds, out of each fiery spring
Of nerve, or piteous anguish of surprise.

If I should wander on till time had close,
Thee with thy muffled paws I should not find,
No chasm, nor any heinous shadow knows
Thy haunt, nor may I fear thee left behind.

Forth, forth! Away! He is not of these Halls—
No motion of him there, Whym Chow, no sound:
His ruby head shall never strike their walls,
And nowhere by a cry shall he be found.

A BRANCH OF LILIES

A branch of lilies, with their stems upright
And crowding heavenward, lies in the moonlight,
With leaves that are not shut at all by night.

Fulfilled of peace and passion to the rim,
Each flower glows ardent as the seraphim,
Tranquil as Abraham, when God talked with him.

Surely they listen what the Spirit saith:
No soil is on their senses: with such breath
The angel spake—*There shall be no more death.*

SHEPHERD APOLLO

Climb with me, Laomedon's white fleeces,
Upward to the hilltops, up to Ida,
To unshaded dews and earliest dawning.
Young and lustrous, god and yet a servant,
As a star past rock and tree I climb.
Raise your heads erect, ye flocks, and listen
To the note I strike from off my lyre!
They have heard, they stand each head erected:
Thus they wait the Grazing-Tune that woos
Slowly to the ridges and the sky.
I have struck it: all submissive listen,
Till they feed in mystery advancing,
Drawn to solemn paces by a spell;
Then to sharper strains one way they hurry,
Fleece by fleece around me, till I strike
Sweet, soft notes that lay them down to slumber,
I beside them, where the sun no more
Falls across us, but the chilling moonlight:
There we sleep, my flock and I together,
I, a god, though servant of a king.

I DANCE AND DANCE !

I dance and dance! Another faun,
A black one, dances on the lawn.
He moves with me, and when I lift
My heels his feet directly shift:
I can't outdance him though I try:
He dances nimble-er than I.
I toss my head, and so does he;
What tricks he dares to play on me!
I touch the ivy in my hair;
Ivy he has and finger there.
The spiteful thing to mock me so!
I will outdance him! Ho, ho, ho!

O BEAUTIFUL, O GRACIOUS LADY

ὦ κάλα, ὦ χαρίεσσα.

What are these roses like? Oh, they are rare,

So balmy pink

I will not shrink

Them to the Graces to compare,

When in gay dance the laughing triad link,

When the round, lifted arms were bare,

And just about

The elbow's pout

The warm flesh glows

Into a flower, incomparable rose:

Such fluctuating stealth

Of light doth interfuse

Their virgin health,

In its soft buoyance, as indues

You, O ye roses, with your heavenly hues.

A TORTOISE

χελύνη.

There is laughter soft and free
'Neath the pines of Thessaly,
Thrilling echoes, thrilling cries
Of pursuit, delight, surprise;
Dryope beneath the trees
With the Hamadryades
Plays upon the mountain-side:
Now they meet, and now they hide.

On the hot and sandy ground,
Crumbling still as still they bound,
Crouches, basks a tortoise; all
But the mortal maiden fall
Back in trepidation; she
Takes the creature on her knee,
Strokes the ardent shell, and lays
Even her cheek against its blaze,

Till she calms her playmates' fear;
Suddenly beside her ear
Flashes forth a tongue; the beast
Changes, and with shape released
Grows into a serpent bright,
Covetous, subduing, tight
Round her body backward bent
In forlorn astonishment.

With their convoluted strain
His upreaching coils attain
Full ascendancy—her breast
By their passion is compressed
Till her breath in terror fails ;

Mid the flicker on the scales,
Half she seems to hear, half sees,
How each frightened comrade flees.

And alone beneath the pine,
With the serpent's heavy twine
On her form, she almost dies:
But a magic from his eyes
Keeps her living, and entranced
At the wonder that has chanced,
As she feels a god within
Fiery looks that thrill and win.

'Tis Apollo in disguise
Holds possession of his prize.
Thus he binds in fetters dire
Those for whom he knows desire;
Mortal loves or poets—all
He must dominate, enthrall
By the rapture of his sway,
Which shall either bless or slay.

So she shudders with a joy
Which no childish fears alloy,
For the spell is round her now
Which has made old prophets bow
Tremulous and wild. An hour
Must she glow beneath his power,
Then a dryad shy and strange
Through the firs thereafter range.

For she joins the troop of those
Dedicate to joy and woes,
Whom by stricture of his love

Leto's son has raised above
Other mortals, who, endowed
With existence unallowed
To their fellows, wander free,
Girt with earth's own mystery.

JASON¹

‘Upon the sea-beach I diffuse my limbs;
My wail athwart the harping sea-plain heaves;
The shards are bitter and the ocean brims
My sorrow from a fount where darkness grieves;
I, Jason, by this vessel of my pride,
Lie, as vain flotsam, ’neath its doughty side.

‘A wife I had and children—she is gone
To her own land—but first she waved my feet
To where my sons, her wrath had fallen upon,
Lay dead together ’neath their cradle-sheet.
A bride I had, but ere to bed she came
Ashes of flame she was, ashes of flame.

‘And I had comrades in grand years of youth:
They are all slain or care no more for deeds.
A golden aim I followed to its truth:
It is a story now no mortal heeds.
Once I drove oxen of fire-shooting lips,
Once I was a ruler of a ship of ships.’

The pebbles ground like teeth within a jaw;
A moan of angry timber thundered forth;
And the great poop of Argo rolled its maw,
With a wave’s action, from the south to north:
Earth quaked in fear at glimpse of Jason’s doom,
As slant on him fell Argo as a tomb.

¹ Fine though the imagination of this is, it perhaps in other ways needs the apology furnished by the fact that it was written by Edith Cooper at the age of seventeen.

EMBALMMENT

Let not a star suspect the mystery!
A cave that haunts thee in the dreams of night
Keep me as treasure hidden from thy sight,
And only thine while thou dost covet me!
As the Asmonean queen perpetually
Embalmed in honey, cold to thy delight,
Cold to thy touch, a sleeping eremite,
Beside thee never sleeping I would be.
Or thou might'st lay me in a sepulchre,
And every line of life will keep its bloom,
Long as thou seal'st me from the common air
Speak not, reveal not, . . . There will be
In the unchallenged dark a mystery,
And golden hair sprung rapid in a tomb.

THE MUMMY INVOKES HIS SOUL.

Down to me quickly, down! I am such dust,
Baked, pressed together; let my flesh be fanned
With thy fresh breath: (come from thy reedy land
Voiceful with birds;) divert me, for I lust
To break, to crumble—prick with pores this crust!
And fall apart delicious, loosening sand.
Oh, joy, I feel thy breath, I feel thy hand
That searches for my heart, and trembles just
Where once it beat. How light thy touch, thy frame!
Surely thou perche'st on the summer trees. . . .
And the garden that we loved? Soul, take thine ease,
I am content, so thou enjoy the same
Sweet terraces and founts, content, for thee,
To burn in this immense torpidity.

TIRESIAS
BUT THAT I KNOW BY EXPERIENCE

Ἔγων δ' ἐμαύτα τοῦτο σύννοιδα.

Climbing the hill a coil of snakes
Impedes 'Tiresias' path; he breaks
His staff across them—idle thrust
That lays the female in the dust,
But dooms the prophet to forego
His manhood, and, as woman, know
The unfamiliar, sovereign guise
Of passion he had dared despise.

Ah, not in the Erinny's ground
Experience so dire were found
As that to the enchanter known
When womanhood was round him thrown:
He trembled at the quickening change,
He trembled at his vision's range,
His finer sense for bliss and dole,
His receptivity of soul;
But when love came, and, loving back,
He learnt the pleasure men must lack,
It seemed that he had broken free
Almost from his immortality.

Seven years he lives as woman, then
Resumes his cruder part 'mong men,
Till him indignant Hera becks
To judge betwixt the joys of sex,
For the great Queen in wrath has heard
By her presumptuous lord averred
That, when he sought her in his brave,
Young godhead, higher bliss he gave

Than the unutterable lure
Of her veiled glances could procure
For him, as balmy-limbed and proud
She drew him to Olympia's cloud.

'In marriage who hath more delight?'
She asks; then quivers and grows white,
As sacrilegious lips reveal
What woman in herself must feel—
And passes an avenging hand
Across his subtle eyelids bland.

Deep-bosomed Queen, fain would'st thou hide
The mystic raptures of the bride!
When man's strong nature draweth nigh
'Tis as the lightning to the sky,
The blast to idle sail, the thrill
Of springtide when the saplings fill.
Though fragrant breath the sun receives
From the young rose's softening leaves,
Her plaited petals once undone
The rose herself receives the sun.

Tiresias, ere the goddess smite,
Look on me with unblinded sight,
That I may learn if thou hast part
In womanhood's secluded heart:
Medea's penetrative charm
Own'st thou to succour and disarm,
Hast thou her passion inly great
Heroes to mould and subjugate?
Can'st thou divine how sweet to bring
Apollo to thy blossoming
As Daphne; or as just a child

Gathering a bunch of tulips wild,
To feel the flowery hillside rent
Convulsive for thy ravishment?

Thou need'st not to unlock thine eyes,
Thy slow ironic smile replies:
Thou hast been woman, and although
The turning snakes with second blow
Of golden staff thou did'st assail,
And crushing at a stroke the male,
Had'st virtue from thy doom to break,
And lost virility re-take—
Thou hast been woman, and her deep,
Magnetic mystery dost keep;
Thou hast been woman, and can'st see
Therefore into futurity:
It is not that Zeus gave thee power
To look beyond the transient hour,
For thou hast trod the regions dun,
Where life and death are each begun;
Thy spirit from the gods set free
Hath communed with Necessity.
Tilphusa's fountain thou may'st quaff
And die, but still thy golden staff
Will guide thee with perceptive hand
Among the Shades to understand
The terrors of remorse and dread,
And prophesy among the dead.

FAIR ROSAMUND

Act I, Scene 3

[*Winchester: a room within the Palace. Enter Queen Elinor and the Princes Henry and Richard.*]

Queen Elinor

Upon the yellow ground of Africa
Young lions tear each other; so these sons,
Whom I, above all women in my pride,
May proudly claim my offspring, wage a strife
Each against each. I care not. 'Tis the blood
Insurgent of their equal parentage.

Prince Henry, to Richard

God's death! You will defy me to my face,
Deny my birthright and my crown's right too,
Because, forsooth, we're brothers—you who crawled
Behind me into light, who took the path
Which I discovered, in that very act
Sealing yourself my follower—bound to keep
A year's step lower in the court of Time;
You to whose brow no golden circle gave
Its pledge of royalty; you, you, to brag!

Queen Elinor

Urged like my own young monarch.

Prince Richard

Glorious fool,
That cannot match a thunderstorm in noise
For all your clapping lungs! I'll sing them still.
My blood is wine that ran from the same press
As your bright liquor; and the vessel!—see,
I'm broad and tall as you! Ay, mother?

Queen Elinor

Yes,

My thumb's nail taller.

Prince Richard

Holding so much more
Of the blue juice of royalty. Nay, Nay;
Ennoble not your heels.

Prince Henry

I'll make yours fly.

Prince Richard

Why then my knees would stand.

Queen Elinor

The lion-heart!

Prince Richard

Kill me, I'd face you as a spectre tall,
With chin that topped your mouth.

Queen Elinor

Divinely bold!

Prince Richard

I'll never yield in heaven, on earth, in hell.

Prince Henry

Thou shalt by everything immovable,
The throne of God, and Satan's iron roof!
I swear thou shalt.

Prince Richard

By all that never yields,
The punishment of fiends and sinners' dole,
I swear I never will.

.

Queen Elinor

Now here's a cheek
For each, and kiss me both together, so!
My mouth is herald 'tween the lips arrayed

In double line of battle on each side.
Farewell, farewell! Thank God you have repaid
My flesh and blood in you with usury.

Prince Henry
I'll force his homage.

Prince Richard
I'll bring down his pride.

Queen Elinor
They feed my heart!
[*Exeunt severally*]

.

[*Enter King Henry to Queen Elinor*]

King Henry
I never have concerned myself with love.
Where's John?

Queen Elinor
Why, with his retinue of fools.
'Tis best to set an ape before base things,
Since whatso'er he sees must fall a prey
To the antics of his visage. Do you need
One to make mock of majesty?

King Henry
The boy,
Where is he? Tell me where? O Elinor,
Consider, you have Henry the young King,
To dote on: grant this favour to mine age,
Let be our youngest boy, leave the soft wax
Of his heart unimpressed by your virulence.
He calls me 'father', and I bear an old
Usurper's aspect to your fiery three.
Plant not your poison in him!

Queen Elinor

With my milk
He sucked it. The soft-browed, deceptive lad,
You munch with kissing, dogs his brothers' heels
And licks allegiance to them. You're disgraced,
Suing for love or humbly on your knees
As once for pardon at your Becket's tomb.
A piteous whine! 'Love me, my little son,
Or my heart will burst'—A sorry spectacle!
I have a king to dote on, a young king,
I tell you to your face, that boy of ours,
Crowned Henry, has my love, because he has
My bridegroom's eyes; but for the rest, my lord,
You're old to think of love: when you were young
You thought not of it.

King Henry

I embraced your lands,
Not you.

Queen Elinor

Plantagenet, you wronged yourself,
As you had made the day and night your foe,
And roused
The violated seasons to confer
Each his peculiar catastrophe
Of death or pestilence. I'll shatter you
As nature shatters—you as impotent
As the uprooted tree to lash the earth
That flings its griping roots out to the air
And plants its burgeoned summits in the soil.
Embraced my lands! Ah, I forget myself,
The loveless are insensate to presage;
'Tis in calamity's harsh stubble-field
They learn to suffer. I'll be harvester,

And sickle your ripe joys. Embraced my lands!
Had you embraced me, I had borne you fruit
Of soft-fleshed children. Hug the progeny
Of your stony lust, and curse me!

[*Exit.*]

King Henry

She forgets,
When she is gone—dear bliss—the thought of her
Lies not a stinking corpse about my heart.
The loved or loathed may haunt us. Who oppress
Are mortal in remembrance; having passed,
As sultry day that kept the air in bond,
They leave us breathing free. How beautiful
To have the mind a solitude for love!
Mine's clamourous as a camp—one silken tent
Close-curtained, secret Rosamund!

JULIA DOMNA
ACT II.

Rome: the Audience-Room of the Empress in the Regia

Julia Domna

I have two emperors:
They must reign side by side, and in my sight
. . . . I must unite my sons:
So shall my Geta
Feel he has place and sovereignty, once more
Taking the common homage. I must plead . . .
And yet I cannot! There are voices in me
That thrust me quite aside, and silences
Too sluggish for my will. You have no sons—
To learn their manhood quells you even more
Than God's dim sovereignty; it is so close,
Too close to meddle with. I stood apart
When Caracalla first struck Geta down;
I saw it as one sees a mountain crush
The city at its foot.

Julia Maesa

But I have seen
How you can make that cruel mouth of his
A bed of balmy flowers.

Julia Domna

It is my dread
Corrupts my deeper love; and I am mortal
Unless he condescend

I go to him
As one who walks asleep and with no aim
That will not startle from me when I wake,
I go to him.

Julia Maesa

No, you command him here.—

Papinian, I beseech you, as you love
Our sovereign lady, seek her elder son.

.

[*Caracalla comes with the net and trident of a retiarius.*]

Caracalla

Rise from your knees

Julia Domna

I am not kneeling.

[*Caracalla is silent. Julia Domna turns away terrified.*]

Caracalla (with a slow smile)

But there is a power

I may myself invoke.

Julia Domna (turning to him)

O Caracalla

Your dæmon, the low voice of your own soul.

Caracalla

You cannot name the power.

[*After a pause, with a deep inclination.*]

.

When least you hope

Your prayer is heard. Lo, I extinguish strife

With Geta, in your presence meet him here,

Within your room; and we will give this palace

One hearth, one board, one audience-chamber, one

Glad-smiling Lar

.

[*The Empress goes herself to fetch Geta; while she is absent Caracalla hides an ambush in the room and exit. After a while re-enter Julia Domna with Geta.*]

Julia Domna

.

Geta you must imprison in your heart
All that might turn to quarrel with your brother.
If you affront him—

Geta [*Entangling his feet in the net on the floor and
kicking it away*]

Is he often here?

Julia Domna
I sent for him.

Geta
And with these bloody toils he visits you?
But it is monstrous he should keep me thus
Dallying his pleasure as I were not Cæsar,
But some rich freedman with a suit, a bribe.

[*He whistles and moves restlessly about.*]

Can we not bribe him to come down to us?

[*Suddenly he returns to his mother*]

Something is crouching there.

[*He points to the throne*]

Julia Domna

No, no, the door is wide,

The air is free

Geta
You bade me leave my sword.
You hurried me along.

Julia Domna

No, no! And if there were,
You are protected; you are safe
As you were wrapt within my womb: I hear
My breath above you.

[*Caracalla's steps advance*]

Do not touch me, Geta,

Not touch me! I am equal peacemaker.

[*Re-enter Caracalla*]

See, Caracalla, we are here.

Caracalla

My welcome!

[*To Geta*] Long may you stay! So, Geta, you
are come!

It is most wise to listen to your mother,
Well-timed to yield a visit.

Geta

I have yielded

Nothing to you, but all her will to her.

Caracalla

We love her, she is ageing with our strife.

Geta

Let it be ended.

Caracalla

Yea, there shall be peace.

.

She must be free

To greet you first when there is morning sun,
Me when sirocco howls,

Geta Augustus, though I hate your name,
Though you have stolen away half of my earth,
Though you annulled my birthright and made
strait

My mother's earlier love, though you corrupted
My father's justice, turned from me the brilliance
Of every favouring star upon my chart,
All competence and all prerogatives
The sky could weave, laid on my life a curse,

Upon my palace, on the food I eat,
The wine I drink, the couch on which I sleep,
The ways that I would journey down, although
You have withstood my heart, withstood my will,
Yet as an answer to your mother's prayer,
In answer to your prayer I make reply,—
Geta Augustus, we are reconciled.
Now the great peace!

[Tarantus and soldiers rush out from hiding]

Geta

O mother, treason, treason!
My sword . . . O mother! *[He wrings his hands]*
Now you must succour.

Julia Domna

Geta, you are safe,
Your shield! *[She throws herself before him]*.
No altar of the living gods
Is more secure.

Tarantus *[to the soldiers, who recoil]*

Kill, kill!

Do not regard her, kill!

[The soldiers close in round Geta; she folds him in her arms]

Geta

Save me!

Julia Domna

Drive off these tigers—Caracalla!
Traitor, traitor No, no! Caracalla,
So many swords—and one is at my heart.

[Geta falls back dead in her arms from a stroke given by Caracalla, who has seized Tarantus' sword]

.

He was murdered;
He fell between my breasts, and I am red,
Behold, from throat to feet. My Geta's blood!
No, do not staunch it, it is all I have,
And I can hear it crying. I am now
No mother to him, for the cry is warm,
And I am cold. I am the ice-cold Earth
For him to lie against, and so his mother
As Nature is—a clod of clay to wrap him,
But fierce as Nature
To take him to myself to be the Earth,
And hear his blood cry up.
I love the cry, I love to nurse the vengeance.
There is in this
Something eternal. Ever on my bosom
He will be laid for the great gods to see.



L'INDIFFÉRENT, BY WATTEAU, IN
THE LOUVRE

He dances on a toe
As light as Mercury's:
Sweet herald, give thy message! No,
He dances on; the world is his,
The sunshine and his wingy hat;
His eyes are round
Beneath the brim:
To merely dance where he is found
Is fate to him
And he was born for that.

He dances in a cloak
Of vermeil and of blue:
Gay youngster, underneath the oak,
Come, laugh and love! In vain we woo;
He is a human butterfly;—
No soul, no kiss,
No glance nor joy!
Though old enough for manhood's bliss,
He is a boy,
Who dances and must die.

LA GIOCONDA, BY LEONARDO DA VINCI,
IN THE LOUVRE

Historic, sidelong, implicating eyes;
A smile of velvet's lustre on the cheek;
Calm lips the smile leads upward: hand that lies
Glowing and soft, the patience in its rest
Of cruelty that waits and does not seek
For prey; a dusky forehead and a breast
Where twilight touches ripeness amorously:
Behind her, crystal rocks, a sea and skies
Of evanescent blue on cloud and creek;
Landscape that shines suppressive of its zest
For those vicissitudes by which men die.

ON A PORTRAIT BY TINTORETTO IN THE
COLONNA GALLERY

An old man sitting in the evening light,
Touching a spinet: there is stormy blow
In the red heavens; but he does not know
How fast the clouds are faring to the night:
He *hears* the sunset as he thrums some slight
Soft tune that clears the track of long ago,
And as his musings wander to and fro
Where the years passed along, a sage delight
Is creeping in his eyes. His soul is old,
The sky is old, the sunset browns to grey;
But he to some dear country of his youth
By those few notes of music borne away,
Is listening to a story that is told,
And listens smiling at the story's truth.

A KISS

DAVID'S RECONCILIATION WITH ABSALOM

The fury of a creature when it drips
Wet-fanged, and thirsty with the desert dust,
The clench in battle on a sword that must
Ravish the foe, the pang of finger tips—
Joy of a captain in recovered ships,
Joy, verity of a long-buried lust
Delightsome to the flesh, is in the thrust
Toward Absalom of the king's tarried lips.
And, lo, beneath that awful benison,
A thief's face glittered, sniffing at the gems
Of the bent crown as they were cassia-stems;
While the young years heard but the rolling on
Of chariots, and a tumult, broke amain
By rumour of an agèd monarch slain.

A DANCE OF DEATH

How strange this ice, so motionless and still,
Yet calling as with music to our feet,
So that they chafe and dare
Their swiftest motion to repeat
These harmonies of challenge, sounds that fill
The floor of ice, as the crystalline sphere
Around the heavens is filled with such a song
That, when they hear,
The stars, each in their heaven, are drawn along!

Oh, see, a dancer! One whose feet
Move on unshod with steel!
She is not skating fleet
On toe and heel,
But only tip-toe dances in a whirl,
A lovely dancing-girl,
Upon the frozen surface of the stream.
Without a wonder, it would seem,
She could not keep her sway,
The balance of her limbs
Sure on the musical, iced river-way
That sparkling, dims
Her trinkets as they swing, so high its sparks
Tingle the sun and scatter song like larks.

She dances 'mid the sumptuous whiteness set
Of winter's sunniest noon;
She dances as the sun-rays that forget
In winter sunset falleth soon
To sheer sunset:
She dances with a languor through the frost
As she never had lost,
In lands where there is snow,

The Orient's immeasurable glow.

Who is this dancer white?
A creature slight,
Weaving the East upon a stream of ice,
That in a trice
Might trip the dance and fling the dancer down?
Does she not know deeps under ice can drown?

This is Salome, in a western land,
An exile with Herodias, her mother,
With Herod and Herodias:
And she has sought the river's icy mass,
Companioned by no other,
To dance upon the ice—each hand
Held, as a snow-bird's wings,
In heavy poise.
Ecstatic, with no noise,
Athwart the ice her dream, her spell she flings;
And Winter in a rapture of delight
Flings up and down the spangles of her light.

Oh, hearken, hearken! Ice and frost,
From these cajoling motions freed,
Have straight given heed
To Will more firm: In their obedience
Their masses dense
Are riven as by a sword
Where is the Vision by the snow adored?
The Vision is no more
Seen from the noontide shore.
Oh, fearful crash of thunder from the stream,
As there were thunder-clouds upon its wave!

Could nothing save
The dancer in the noontide beam?
She is engulfed and all the dance is done.
Bright leaps the noontide sun—
But stay, what leaps beaneath it? A gold head,
That twinkles with its jewels bright
As water-drops
O murdered Baptist of the severed head,
Her head was caught and girded tight,
And severed by the ice-brook sword, and sped
In dance that never stops.
It skims and hops
Across the ice that rasped it. Smooth and gay,
And void of care,
It takes its sunny way:
But underneath the golden hair,
And underneath those jewel-sparks,
Keen noontide marks
A little face as grey as evening ice;
Lips, open in a scream no soul may hear,
Eyes fixed as they beheld the silver plate
That they at Macherontis once beheld;
While the hair trails, although so fleet and nice
The motion of the head as subjugate
To its own law: yet in the face what fear,
To what excess compelled!

Salome's head is dancing on the bright
And silver ice. O holy John, how still
Was laid thy head upon the salver white,
When thou hadst done God's Will!

THE TORRENT¹

And here thy footsteps stopped? This writhing swell,
This surging, mad, voluminous, white stream,
Burst starving from the hills, knows what befell
That instant in the clear mid-summer beam?
To me in the grey, azure iris-bed
Of the old garden I was left to tend,
And tended, came the word that thou wert dead . . .
Is it on these round eddies I must spend
My passionate conjecture? Thou art gone;
And I am brought to these orchestral shores,
This clanging music where I dare not moan,
Dare not lament! Fountain from fountain pours—
Yea, they have borne thee, yea, they bear thee on
To the smooth-rushing waters of the Rhone.

POSSESSION

Thou hast no grave. What is it that bereaves,
That has bereft us of thee? Thou art gone!
The forest with its infinite soft leaves
May have received thee, or thou wandered'st on,
The tender, wild, exhilarating flowers
Crowning thy broken pathway; or the white
Glare of the torrent smote thee; or the powers
Of the great sculptured country, from their height
Prompted thee upward. Thou hast made no plea
For rest or for possession; and thy hold
Is on the land forever: thine the gold
Brimming the crystal crests, the gold that fills
The vales, the valley's purity,
And thine the inmost meadows of the hills.

¹ These six sonnets refer to the strange disappearance of Edith Cooper's father on the Riffelalp in June, 1897. His body was not found till months later. He may have fallen, or Italian navvies at work on the road may have helped in the catastrophe.

THE FOREST

He lay asleep, and the long dark season wore:
The forest shadows marked him limb by limb
As on a dial: when the light grew dim,
A steady darkness on the spiny floor,
He lay asleep. The Alpine roses bore
Their latest blooms and withered at the rim:
The harvest moon came down and covered him,
And passed, and it was stiller than before.
Then fell the autumn, little falling there
Save some quick-dropping fir-cone on the mould,
Save with the ebbing leaves his own white hair;
And the great stars grew wintry; in the cold
Of a wide-spreading dusk, so woodmen say,
As one asleep on his right arm he lay.

BURIAL

They found thee—Nature burying her dead,
Covering thee o'er with her dead summer dross:
Shrunk spikes of blossom lightly did she toss,
And the brown needles of the fir-tree spread
Thick as a cloak about thee, on thy bed
Of withering leaves, dropt earth, long mountain moss,
With little branches bowed and laid across,
And lapping over. Uninhabited
Was the wild wood, savage with crag and fir,
And the wild goats leapt 'mid the crags, so deep
In winter was the silence: but we found
Nature alone that waited on thy sleep,
Suffering no other eye on that strewn ground,
None nearer than the stars to watch with her.

FALLING LEAVES

To hush within my heart the beating cry
Up toward thy hills, I cross an English street,
On to a garden where great lindens meet:
• The leaves are falling—ah, how free to die!
• The leaves are falling, life is passing by,
• The leaves are falling slowly at my feet,
And soon with the dead summer, soon—how sweet!
They will be garnered safe from every eye.
• Their honey-mingling life among the trees
• Is as it had not been; by twos and threes
• Wide to the dimming earth they fall, they fall,
Yet, as I watch them dropping, something stills,
Heart of my heart, that over-bitter call,
• As for one lost, to thee among thy hills.

MOULDERING LEAVES

O leaves that are not simple leaves that shed,
To us, that cannot be! To other men
They are the years that will not come again,
The years that fade; they are our fading dead:
• For he, our lonesome One, was forest led;
• He drew not to Avernus' loathsome den;
• But roamed and wearied in the woods, and then
• Lay down to die, the forest overhead.
• He gave himself to earth, even as the leaves,
• To waste in humbleness, by day, by night,
Before the sun, patient to disappear,
Patient to stay; therefore to us the leaves,
Even the mouldered leaves of every year,
Repeat the form of that slow, funeral rite.

IN MEMORIAM ROBERT BROWNING
Slowly we disarray,
Our leaves grow few,
Few on the bough, and many on the sod.
Round him no ruining autumn tempest blew;
Gathered on genial day,
He fills, fresh as Apollo's bay,
The Hand of God.

THE OLD HUNDRED YEARS

God, thou art gathering in Thy Bosom's fold
The hundred years where all I love drew breath,
And sought and found their little age of gold,
And fell on dreams awhile, then fell on death.
Oh, sweet the summers that have known their prime,
The English hedgerows where the catkins blew
When they were passing by, or breathed the time
Of the roses red and white and all their dew!
Oh, blest to them the earth, to them the sky!
And how they listened when the lark sang high!
But now, of human kind, one only hears
How ran their accents when great news befell:
Gone are those days of simple miracle:
Thou coverest their voices with the years.

MAIDENHAIR

Plato of the clear, dreaming eye and brave
Imaginings, conceived, withdrawn from light,
The hollow of man's heart even as a cave.
With century-slow dropping stalactite
My heart was dripping tedious in despair.
But yesterday, awhile before I slept:
I wake to find it live with maidenhair
And mosses to the spiky pendants crept.
Great prodigies there are—Jehovah's flood
Widening the margin of the Red Sea shore,—
Great marvel when the moon is turned to blood
It is to mortals, yet I marvel more
At the soft rifts, the pushings at my heart,
That lift the great stones of its rock apart.

GOOD FRIDAY

There is wild shower and winter on the main.
Foreign and hostile, as the flood of Styx,
The rumbling water: and the clouds that mix
And drop across the land, and drive again
Whelm as they pass. And yet the bitter rain,
The fierce exclusion hurt me not; I fix
My thought on the deep-blooded crucifix
My lips adore, and there is no more pain:
A Power is with me that can love, can die,
That loves, and is deserted, and abides;
A loneliness that craves me and enthrals;
And I am one with that extremity,
One with that strength. I hear the alien tides
No more, no more the universe appals.

POWER

To-day I am God's very name, *I am*:
Open to me the tombs of prophets dead;
Open the unbuilt tombs; apparent, red,
The blood of every lie. I probe each sham;
I search each adoration; as a lamb
Isaac is bound for slaughter, but, instead,
Abraham, his eyes in sacrifice, is led
Greatly rejoicing to the briar-caught ram.
His faith is with me, even to this hour
He lives, so simply he received my power:
But ye that question me, that say ye know
Your God, whence am I, ye shall taste of death.
• I am the blowing wind—whence do I blow?
I am the blowing wind that shattereth.

NIMIS HONORATI SUNT ¹

'Cast not your pearls down before swine!'

The words are Thine!—

Listen, cast not

The treasure of a white sea-grot,
An uncontaminate, round loveliness,
A pearl of ocean-waters fathomless,
A secret of exceeding, cherished light,
A dream withdrawn from evening infinite,
A beauty God gave silence to—cast not
This wealth from treasury of Indian seas,
Or Persian fisheries,
Down in the miry dens that clot
The feet of swine, who trample, hide and blot.

To us Thy words. but see,

In Thy idolatry

Of us, all thought

Of counsel fails and falls to nought!

Pearl of Great Price, within the monstrance set,

Why wilt Thou for Thyself Thy charge forget?

O Love, from deeps before the world began,

O Sheltered of God's Bosom, why for man

Wilt Thou so madly in the slough be cast,

Concealed 'mid tramlings and disgrace of swine?

O Host, O White, Benign!

Why spend in rage of love at last

The wisdom all eternity amassed?

¹The following poems, like that on p. 106, are from *Poems of Adoration*, which book was, save for one or two pieces, entirely written by Edith Cooper, and wholly written since her conversion.

UNSURPASSED

Lord Jesus, Thou didst come to us, to man,
From Godhead's open golden Halls,
From Godhead's hidden Throne
Of glory, no imagination can
Achieve, and it must glow alone,
Behind a cloud that falls
Over the Triune Perfectness,—its voice
Of thunder, making Cherubim rejoice,
And Seraphims as doves in rapture moan.

Yet, Thou didst come to us a wailing child,
Homeless, tied up in swaddling clothes,
To live in poverty
And by the road: then, with detractions piled,
And infamies of misery
From scourge and thorns and blows,
To die a felon, fastened into wood
By nails that in their jeering harshness could
Clamp vermin of the forests to a tree.

And Thou dost come to us from Heaven each day,
Obeying words that call Thee down
On mortal lips; and Thou,
Jesus, dost suffer mortal power to slay
Its God in sacrifice: dost bow
Thy bright Supremacy to lose its Crown,
Closed in a prison, yet through Godhead free
To every insult, gibe and contumely—
Come from Forever to be with us Now.

So Thou dost come to us. But when at last
Thou callest us to come to Thee,
We only have to die,

Only from weary bones our flesh to cast,
Only to give a bitter cry;
Yea, but a little while to see
Our beauty falling from us, in its fall
Destined to lose its suasions that enthral,
Destined to be as any gem put by.

We but fulfil our stricken nature's law
To fail and to consume and end;
While Thou dost come and break,
Coming to us, Thy Nature with a flaw
Of death and for our mortal sake
Thou dost Thy awful wholeness rend.
* Oh, let me run to Thee, as runs a wind,
* That leaves the withered trees, it moved, behind,
* And triumphs forward, careless of its wake!

MACRINUS AGAINST TREES

'How bare! How all the lion-desert lies
Before your cell!

Behind are leaves and boughs on which your eyes
Could, as the eyes of shepherd, on his flock,
That turn to the soft mass from barren rock,
Familiarly dwell.'

'O Traveller, for me the empty sands
Burning to white!

There nothing on the wilderness withstands
The soul or prayer. I would not look on trees;
My thoughts and will were shaken in their breeze,
And buried as by night.

'Yea, listen! If you build a cell, at last,
Turned to the wood,
Your fall is near, your safety overpast;
And if you plant a tree beside your door
Your fall is there beside it, and no more
The solitude is frank and good.

'For trees must have soft dampness for their growth,
And interfold
Their boughs and leaves into a screen, not loath
To hide soft, tempting creatures at their play,
That, playing timbrels and bright shawms, delay,
And wear one's spirit old.

'Smoothly such numberless distractions come—
Impertinence
Of multiplicity, salute and hum.
Away with solitude of leafy shade,
Mustering coy birds and beasts, and men waylaid,
Tingling each hooded sense!

‘Did not God call out of a covert-wood
Adam and Eve,
Where, cowering under earliest sin, they stood,
The hugged green-leaves in bunches round their den?
Himself God called them out——so lost are men
Whom forest haunts receive!’

VIRGO POTENS

Young on the mountains and fresh
As the wind that thrills her hair,
As the dews that lap the flesh
Of her feet from cushions of thyme;
While her feet through the herbage climb,
Growing hardier, sweeter still
On rockroses and cushions of thyme,
As she springs up the hill!

A goat in its vaultings less lithe,
From rock, to a tuft, to a rock;
As the young of wild-deer blithe,
The young of wild-deer, yet alone:
Strong as an eaglet just flown,
She wanders the white-woven earth,
As the young of wild-deer, yet alone,
In her triumph of mirth.

She will be Mother of God!
Secret he lies in her womb:
And this mountain she hath trod
Was later in strength than is she,
Who, before its mass might be,
Was chosen to bear her bliss:
Conceived before mountains was she
Before any abyss.

The might that dwells in her youth
Is song to her heart and soul,
Of joy that, as joy, is truth,
That magnifies, and leaps
With its jubilant glee and sweeps,
O fairest, her breast, her throat,

Her mouth, and magnanimous leaps,
As the mountain lark's note!

Across the old hills she springs,
With God's first dream as her crown:
She scales them swift, for she brings
Elizabeth news of grace.
The charity of her face
Is that of a lovely day,
When the birds are singing news of grace,
And the storms are away.

DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

Come down from the Cross, my soul, and save thyself—
come down!

Thou wilt be free as wind. None meeting thee will
know

How thou wert hanging stark, my soul, outside the
town,

Thou wilt fare to and fro;

Thy feet in grass will smell of faithful thyme; thy
head. . . .

Think of the thorns, my soul—how thou wilt cast
them off,

With shudder at the bleeding clench they hold!

But on their wounds thou wilt a balsam spread,

And over that a verdurous circle rolled

With gathered violets, sweet bright violets, sweet

As incense of the thyme on thy free feet;

A wreath thou wilt not give away, nor wilt thou doff.

Come down from the Cross, my soul, and save thyself;
yea, move

As scudding swans pass lithely on a seaward stream!

Thou wilt have everything thou wert made great to love;

Thou wilt have ease for every dream;

No nails with fang will hold thy purpose to one aim;

There will be arbours round about thee, not one trunk

Against thy shoulders pressed and burning them with
hate,

Yea, burning with intolerable flame.

O lips, such noxious vinegar have drunk,

There are through valley-woods and mountain glades

Rivers where thirst in naked prowess wades;

And there are wells in solitude whose chill no hour
abates!

Come down from the Cross, my soul, and save thyself!

A sign

Thou wilt become to many as a shooting star.

They will believe thou art ethereal, divine,

When thou art where they are;

They will believe in thee and give thee feasts and
praise.

They will believe thy power when thou hast loosed
thy nails;

For power to them is fetterless and grand:

For destiny to them, along their ways,

Is one whose earthly Kingdom never fails.

Thou wilt be as a prophet or a king

In thy tremendous term of flourishing—

And thy hot royalty with acclamations fanned.

Come down from the Cross, my soul, and save thyself!

. . . . Beware !

Art thou not crucified with God, who is thy breath?

Wilt thou not hang as He while mockers laugh and
stare?

Wilt thou not die His death?

Wilt thou not stay as He with nails and thorns and
thirst?

Wilt thou not choose to conquer faith in His lone style?

Wilt thou not be with Him and hold thee still?

Voices have cried to Him, *Come Down!* Accursed

And vain those voices, striving to beguile!

How heedless, solemn-gray in powerful mass,

Christ droops among the echoes as they pass!

O soul, remain with Him, with Him thy doom fulfil!

TOO LATE¹

'O Virgins, very lovely in your troop,
O Virgins, very lovely, very white,
How is it that your lilies droop?
How is it that the lamps you bear are not alight?

'Why are you bending downward from the hill?
Bright is it on the hill as for a feast.'
Trembling they sped as to fulfil
Some grievous prophecy; nor heeded me the least.

Downward they passed Oh, they were very fair,
But stricken as the frosted leaves to doom!
Their eyes I saw Bright with despair
Their eyes were very lamps to light them to their doom.

Full were their looks of love and sorrowing
As they passed by me, shaking out a spell
Of sighs, of balms. And is it such a thing
Can be, that they were hurrying to Hell?

¹The remaining poems, except the very last, are from *Mystic Trees*, a companion volume to *Poems of Adoration*, but written as predominantly by Katherine Bradley as that had been by her 'fellow.'

A DREAMER

Ecce Somniator venit: venite, occidamus eum!

Behold this Dreamer in His golden locks;
Murmuring is He and murmuring of His flocks;
Yea, murmuring of the bowing wheat in shocks!

O lovely Dreamer, what can be Thy dream?
Full of an idle pity Thou dost seem,
Jesus, and of an arrogant, wild theme.

How,—Dost Thou ask that we should worship Thee?
O Wanderer through the fields, how should this be?
What hast Thou done who stepst so wearily?

Loved art Thou of Thy Father? He is great,
Thou say'st, and He confirms Thee in Thy state.
Were it not better we should kill Thee straight,

Before of Thy fair dream we are undone?
For it is truth Thou speak'st: we are Thy sun,
Thy moon, Thy circling stars, O worshipt One!

Come let us bind Thee, take from Thee Thy crook,
And murder Thee, Beloved, in some wild nook!
It is this dream in Thee we cannot brook.

We bind, we cast Thee down into a pit;
We know not what we do: it is most fit—
Thou hast a dream—that Thou interpret it.

THEY TOOK JESUS

He broke forth from the flowers,
To front these hellish powers;
A Rose of Sharon He,
Uplifted from the tree.

Oh, fair of Spirit, He!
As Venus from the Sea,
So soft, so borne along,
He drew to that mad throng.

He questioned them: He thought
He was the one they sought—
He is the only One.
They have bound Him, He is gone!

QUI RENOVAT JUVENTUTEM MEAM

Make me grow young again,
Grow young enough to die,
That, in a joy unseared of pain,
I may my Lover, loved, attain,
With that fresh sigh
Eternity
Gives to the young to breathe about the heart,
Until their trust in youth-time shall depart.

Let me be young as when
To die was past my thought:
And earth with straight immortal men,
And women deathless to my ken,
Cast fear to nought!
Let faith be fraught,
My Bridegroom, with such gallant love, its range
Simply surpasses every halt of change!

Let me come to Thee young,
When thou dost challenge *Come!*
With all my marvelling dreams unsung,
Their promise by first passion stung,
Though chary, dumb
Thou callest *Come!*
Let me rush to Thee when I pass,
Keen as a child across the grass.

ANNUNCIATION SILENCE

• Lo, the wind that blows as it doth list:
• Lo, the flame that thriddeth the abyss!
Mary now hath bound her will:
In the house she keepeth still:
And she meeteth Joseph's kiss.

• Very lovely as a moon in mist
She appeareth in her place.
Something in her heart doth lack,
For she doth not kiss him back—
Weeps a little in his face.

.

Now from lover's hope he doth desist;
For she groweth to him terrible
As an army clad in banners,
With those pitiful lone manners:
And he guards a dream he may not tell.

THE HOMAGE OF DEATH

How willingly
I yield to Thee
This very dust!
My body, that was not enough!
Fair was it as a silken stuff,
Or as a spice, or gold,
Fair to behold!

Beloved, I give Thee all
This Adam's Fall,
This my desert—
Thy Father would not let Thee see
Corruption, but I give it Thee.
Behold me thus abhorred,
My penance, Lord!

A handful in Thy Hand,
As if of fair, white sand,
Thou wroughtest me;
Clean was I for a little while
This dust is of another style;
Its fumes, most vile of sin,
To stink begin.

O Victor King, and when
Thou raisest me again,
For me no fame;
Just white, amid the whiter souls,
Efface me 'mid the shining stoles,
Lost in a lovely brood
And multitude:

My soul even as the maid

Cophetua arrayed
In samite fine;
And set her by Him on His Throne.
O Christ, what homage can atone
For this caprice in Thee
To worship me?

ARIDITY

O soul, canst thou not understand
Thou art not left alone,
As a dog to howl and moan
His master's absence? Thou art as a book
Left in a room that He forsook,
But returns to by and by,
A book of His dear choice,—
That quiet waiteth for His Hand,
That quiet waiteth for His Eye,
That quiet waiteth for His Voice.

THOU COMEST DOWN TO DIE

Thou comest down to die,
Each day to die for me;
Hasting with feet that fly
Down from the Trinity.

How beautiful Thy Feet,
Even as Hermes' are,
That Thou shouldst run so fleet
To Golgotha!

Each day another girds
And binds Thee to the Wood.
• I sing, as singing birds,
• The glory of Thy Mood.

CAPUT TUUM UT CARMELUS¹

I watch the arch of her head,
As she turns away from me. . . .
I would I were with the dead,
Drowned with dead at sea,
All the waves rocking over me!

As St. Peter turned and fled
From the Lord, because of sin,
I look on that lovely head;
And its majesty doth win
Grief in my heart as for sin.

Oh, what can death have to do
With a curve that is drawn so fine,
With a curve that is drawn as true
As the mountain's crescent line? . . .
Let me be hid where the dust falls fine!

¹ For the complete comprehension of the remaining poems it is necessary to know that during the production of these two books both poetesses had been stricken by cancer. But Miss Bradley, who was the second victim, concealed the fact, which was only discovered on the day of 'her fellow's' funeral. Though suffering agony herself, she had thus spared 'her fellow,' who was farther gone in the malady, the final cruelty of knowing that she was not alone to suffer such a death.

MY GLORY IN THEE IS NOT CEASED
Beloved, my glory in thee is not ceased,
Whereas, as thou art waning, forests wane:
Unmoved, as by the victim is the priest,
I pass the world's great altitudes of pain.
But when the stars are gathered for a feast,
Or shadows threaten on a radiant plain,
Or many golden cornfields wave amain,
Oh then, as one from a filled shuttle weaves,
My spirit grieves.

SHE IS SINGING

She is singing to thee, Domine!

Dost hear her now?

She is singing to Thee from a burning throat,

And melancholy as the owl's love-note;

She is singing to Thee from the utmost bough

Of the tree of Golgotha, where it is bare,

And the fruit torn from it that fruited there;

She is singing. . . . Canst Thou stop the strain,

The homage of such pain?

Domine, stoop down to her again!

FELLOWSHIP ¹

- In the old accents I will sing, my Glory, my Delight,
- In the old accents, tipped with flame, before we knew
the right,
- True way of singing with reserve. O Love, with
pagan might.

White in our steeds, and white too in our armour
let us ride,
Immortal, white, triumphing, flashing downward
side by side
To where our friends, the Argonauts, are fighting
with the tide.

Let us draw calm to them, Beloved, the souls on
heavenly voyage bound,
Saluting as one presence. Great disaster were it
found,
If one with half-fed lambency should halt and
flicker round.

O friends so fondly loving, so beloved, look up to us
In constellation breaking on your errand, prosperous,
O Argonauts!

.

- Now, faded from their sight,
- We cling and joy. It was thy intercession gave me
right,
- My Fellow, to this fellowship. My Glory my Delight!

¹ Miss Bradley's last poem, which she added to *Dedicated*, the posthumous volume of Miss Cooper's *Juvenillia*.

